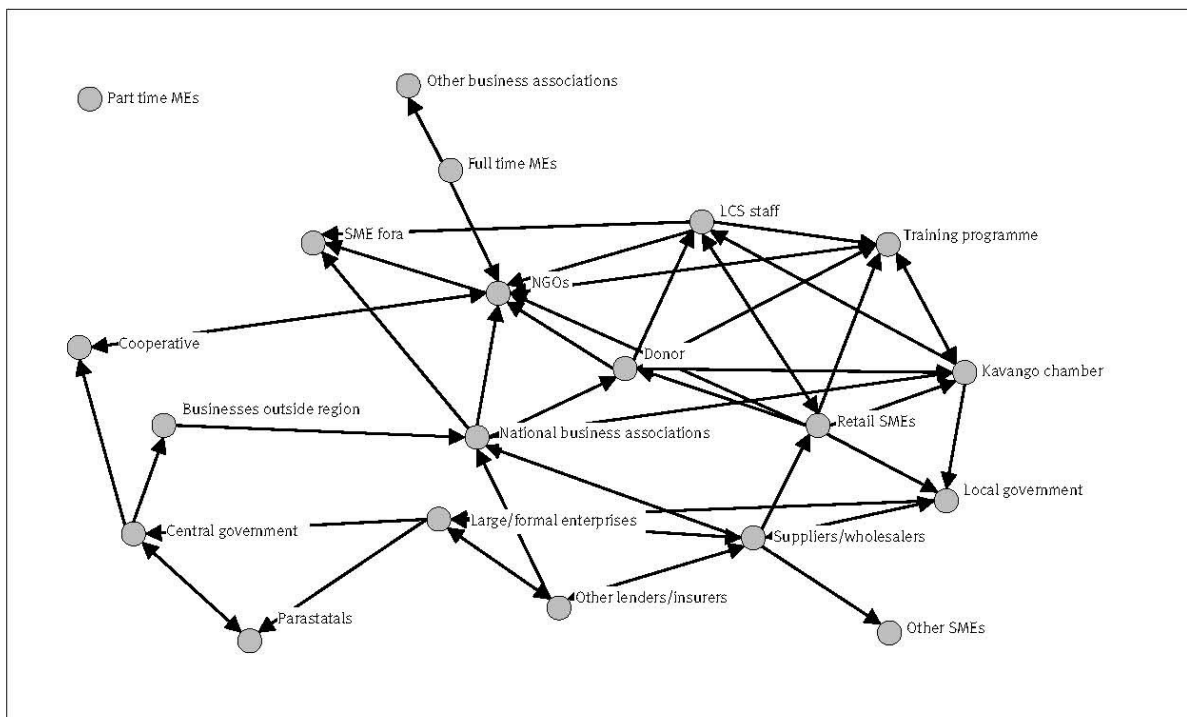# Social Network Analysis

A network is a simple concept. It consists of two things: nodes and links between those nodes. In social network analysis the nodes of concern are people, groups and organisations. In other areas of network analysis the nodes of concern may be pages in the World Wide Web, difference species in an ecosystem or different compounds in a cell. In social network analysis links may be social contacts, exchanges of information, political influence, money, joint membership in an organisation, joint participation in specific events or many other aspects of human relationships. The defining feature of social network analysis is the focus on the structure of relationships.

Figure 3: Social network analysis

Source: Biggs and Matsaert (1998) in Rick Davies (2003)

It has been argued for some time that organisations are embedded in networks of larger social processes, which they influence, and which also influence them (Granovetter, 1985; 1992). Recognising this can help us bridge links between different levels of analyses, relating to different types of organisational entities within development aid: projects, country programmes, and government policies. Within the aid agencies themselves the structuring of relationships between staff is another set of relationship choices with direct consequences for how local projects and national policies relate to each other or not. Structure can link strategies at different levels, or not (Davies, 2003).

Further resources

- Davies, Rick (2003) *Network Perspectives in the Evaluation of Development Interventions: More Than a Metaphor*, see: www.mande.co.uk/docs/nape.pdf.
- The International Network of SNA, with a comprehensive list of resources, see: www.ire.org/sna.

- Ramalingam, Ben (2005) 'Tools for Knowledge and Learning', *RAPID Toolkit*, London: ODI, see: www.odi.org.uk/Rapid/Publications/Documents/KM_toolkit_web.pdf. (Especially for further resources on networks and on the different connecting roles that people can play)
- Kincaid, Larry (2000) 'Social networks, ideation, and contraceptive behaviour in Bangladesh: a longitudinal analysis', *Social Science & Medicine* 50(2): 215-31. (On the use of a social network approach to family planning communication in Bangladesh)
- Perkin, Emily and Julius Court (2005) 'Networks and Policy Processes in International Development: A Literature Review' *ODI Working Paper* 252, see: www.odi.org.uk/Rapid/Publications/Documents/WP252.pdf).
- Castells, Manuel (2004) 'Why networks matter', published as an afterword to the recent Demos collection of essays: McCarthy et al. (2004) *Network Logic: Who governs in an interconnected world?*
- Boonyabancha, Somsook (1999) *Citizen Networks to Address Urban Poverty Experiences of Urban Community Development Office*, Thailand UCDO, Asian Coalition for Housing Rights.